Subsequently, orders have been issued on 16.3.2005 that cities/towns which have been placed in a lower classification shall continue to retain their existing classification until further orders. In view of this, Ajmer continues to retain its existing 'B' class classification for the purpose of drawal of HRA/CCA to Central Government employees.

Increase in coverage of pension scheme

2853. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only about 11 per cent of the total population of our country is covered by a proper pension scheme and a large number of people are still not covered by pensions so far;

(b) if so, Government's response thereto; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken for increasing coverage of pension scheme in various fields?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Retirement Benefits in one form or the other are available to only about 13% of the working population of the country.

(b) and (c) Government has already implemented a new restructured defined contribution pension scheme, namely, New Pension System (NPS) for all Central Government recruits (excluding Armed Forces, in the first stage) with effect from 1.1.2004. The NPS will also be available on a voluntary basis to all persons including self-employed professionals and others in the unorganised sector. State Governments may also opt to join the new system as and when they desire.

As regard to Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, benefits of pension are available to all the eligible employees of an establishment to which the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 applies.

As on 31.3.2004 there were 280.90 lakh members under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995.